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ABSTRACT

In 1996, Harrisburg Area Community College (Pennsylvania) participated in the American Association of Community Colleges' Exploring America's Communities project, works to strengthen the teaching and learning of American history, literature, and culture at U.S. community colleges. The project's primary goal was to bring English teachers together for meetings every three weeks to discuss the writings of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, women, and others. The discussions emphasized the social elements that unite Americans. Other elements of the program's implementation included seminars, content speakers, readings, vidoeconferences, meetings, and course outline and syllabus reviews. Accomplishments were as follows: (1) a mulitcultural reader was selected for English instructors; (2) discussion meetings were organized for fall 1996; (3) a videoconference was held; (4) grant activities were published in newsletters; (5) reports were made campus wide; (6) a mentor visited the college; (7) a novel was selected for future meetings; and (8) the faculty discussed an article called "Finding Ourselves in Multiculturalism." Obstacles that the program faced included finding that one of the novels on the group's reading list was out of print and a lack of time. Faculty and students still need to continue the conversations, plan for a seminar leader or videoconference, discuss assignments, consider giving a teacher release time to oversee the project in the future, and continue to report progress to appropriate campus bodies. (HAA)

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Harrisburg Area Community College
Exploring America's Communities
Progress Report

In: National Conference on American Pluralism and Identity Program Book
(New Orleans, LA, January 18-19, 1997)

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. A multi-cultural reader was selected for adjunct English 101 Instructors.
2. Discussion meetings were set up for Fall, 1996. From 10-15 adjunct and full-time faculty met. About three meetings were held.
3. A videoconference was held in November on African Americans and the Publishing world, sponsored by the college president.
4. Grant activities were published in the Grants Newsletter as well as the campus newsletter.
5. Reports were made to Director of Institutional Diversity, the Institutional Diversity Task Force, and the Communications and the Arts Division.
6. Dr. Kathy Fedorko, mentor visited the college on October 2 from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. She met with the Director of Institutional Diversity, Chair of the College Task Force on Diversity, Dean of the C&A Division, and an adjunct instructor of English. She also attended the second meeting in our series of conversations on pluralism.
7. A novel was selected . Spring, 1997 meetings. Lakota Woman , a national best seller by Mary Crow Dog.
8. The group discussed the article "I Am The Canon: Finding

Ourselves in Multiculturalism," by Patrick Shannon. In our discussions we discussed different assignments. We discussed student reactions and student learning. Our discussion went very well. Each participant was enthusiastic about discussing the material. Student response for the most part was favorable. The project had a very successful beginning. We worked on every item in our action plan.

OBSTACLES

Obstacles have been very few. The only one I can think of was the novel Jasmine which we originally planned to read was out of print. We can always use more time. The meetings were held at 3 in the afternoon. Those who attended enjoyed the discussion even though some meetings lasted beyond 4:30. Since diversity is a college goal, there is much support throughout the college community from the president's office on down.

REMAINING WORK

We still need to continue our conversations, plan for a seminar leader or videoconference, discuss Lakota Woman, discuss assignments, consider publishing student essays and assignments, consider offering an adjunct teacher release time oversee the project in the future, and continue to report progress to appropriate campus bodies.

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EXPLORING AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES: IN QUEST OF COMMON GROUND

Progress Report

Harrisburg Area Community College, established February 14, 1964, was the first community college in Pennsylvania. The college is a multi-campus college that offers programs and courses at three campuses: the Wildwood Campus in Harrisburg, the Lancaster Campus, and the Lebanon Campus. Courses are also offered at the Gettysburg Center and additional locations throughout southcentral Pennsylvania. The college with its three campuses is located in southcentral Pennsylvania. The college has 10,719 credit students (Fall, 1996) and 17,749 students in non-credit programs (Fall, 1995). The multi-campus college serves an area that includes Cumberland, Dauphin, Perry, Lancaster, Lebanon, York and Adams counties. The population total from these counties should come close to one million people. Harrisburg Area Community College is well known throughout the area for low cost quality education.

The college is "dedicated to delivering superior educational value characterized by learning-centered teaching and continuous instructional enhancement and innovation in our multi-campus environment that is accessible, affordable, and well maintained." (College Catalog) The college recently received a national award for its diversity initiatives.

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The college serves a diverse student population.

ACTION PLAN PRIMARY GOALS

The two year project is to bring English teachers together for meetings every three weeks during the regular semesters. The goal is to discuss the writings of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, women and others. The emphasis is to be on what holds Americans together. Seminar speakers and readings will focus on content literature. The attention will be more on what is being read, rather than arguments for diversity. At least two content speakers or formal videoconferences are to be planned for each year. The meetings will function to clarify the goals and the direction of the English 101-102 sequence, bring adjunct and full-time faculty together, and enhance faculty understanding of diverse literatures. A multi-cultural text is to be selected for adjunct English 101 teachers for Fall, 1996. Appropriate meetings with Campus leaders in Diversity Initiatives were planned. Course outlines and syllabi were reviewed and appropriate changes are to be made. The primary goal is to enhance and improve instruction through discussions on American pluralism and identity.

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REACTIONS

The conversations on: What does it mean to be an American ? What divides us ? What brings us together ? What do we have in common ? among students and colleagues were lively and yet serious. The discussions were engaging and intellectually stimulating. Eyes were opened to the different struggles and dreams of a diverse people. Students were able to see others and their struggles. I beleive that the college community is made stronger because we are able to see how much is held in common with others from differing backgrounds. The conversations allow us to feel a sense of pride and respect for the experiences of others. It makes compassion and empathy possible. Those with privilege and those without privilege will not always come together, but breaking the silence and discussing the issues that seem to separate us often works to bring us together. The dialog has been fruitful and must continue.